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Senate committee moves cervical cancer vaccine legislation

LANSING – Legislation that would require all girls entering the sixth grade to receive a vaccination to prevent the virus that causes cervical cancer passed the Michigan Senate Health Policy Committee unanimously today, said Senator Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance. The vaccine is required unless parents choose to opt-out as provided under Michigan law.

“Parents have the option to decline immunizing their children based on medical, religious or philosophical reasons,” Sen. Hammerstrom said. “The opt-out provision includes the HPV vaccine as well.”

Senate Bills 1416 and 1417 require a vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV) to be added to the immunization schedule for Michigan’s schools and academies beginning next school year.

Sen. Hammerstrom’s efforts come after the recent FDA approval of an HPV vaccine for girls and women aged 9 through 26. The federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended routine vaccination in girls 11 and 12-years-old and, as appropriate, for the other approved age groups.

The vaccine has been shown in clinical trials to be 100 percent effective at preventing disease from the two types of HPV that are responsible for approximately 70 percent of all cervical cancers. Cervical cancer is the second most diagnosed cancer among women, behind breast cancer.

“Today, Michigan moved one step closer to helping to eliminate cervical cancer,” said Sen. Hammerstrom, who chairs the Senate Health Policy Committee. “The thought of actually preventing a type of cancer has been unheard of until now. In 20 years, our granddaughters and great-granddaughters may not even have to worry about this type of cancer.”

The bills have bipartisan support, including all the women in the Michigan Senate.

“This legislation is about preventing cancer and saving lives,” Sen. Hammerstrom said. “To make it about anything else would be overshadowing this incredible medical breakthrough.”

(More)

Sen. Hammerstrom's efforts stem from her participation in Women In Government's "Challenge to Eliminate Cervical Cancer Campaign," which mobilizes state legislators to target cervical cancer eradication through education and policy. Since 2004, 45 states have introduced legislation or resolutions tackling this issue. Michigan, however, is the first state to require the vaccine for school entry.

Sen. Hammerstrom, who has served as chair of the Board of Directors for WIG, was one of the first legislators to join the *Campaign*.

SBs 1416 and 1417 now await consideration by the full Senate.

About Cervical Cancer

Worldwide, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer-killer of women, with almost a quarter-million deaths each year. In the United States, the American Cancer Society estimates 9,710 women will be diagnosed with and more than 3,700 women will die of cervical cancer in 2006. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 20 million people are currently infected with HPV, with 6.2 million new infections occurring annually and approximately 80 percent of sexually active women will be infected with HPV by age 50. For 90 percent of infected women, the virus is naturally cleared by the body and becomes undetectable within two years. However, persistent infection with "high-risk" types of HPV can cause cell changes that, untreated, can lead to cervical cancer.

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Editor's note: Audio of Sen. Hammerstrom is available for download on Hammerstrom's Audiowire at: <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/audiowire/hammerstrom/index.htm>